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- b6 b7c*
- A1 cont'd*
- 1 a. a support member;
 - b. a holder for compressibly holding a strap connector without penetration;
 - c. a strap connector compressibly held by said holder without penetration of said strap connector by said holder; and
 - d. a fastener means attaching said holder to said support member.

Remarks**10 Claim Objections**

Applicant has amended Claim 1 in light of the Examiner's objection by inserting the article "a" before "fastener means". By claiming "a" fastener means, Applicant means to claim one or more fastener means, not a single 15 fastener means only.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-5 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being 20 anticipated by ADVANCED CONNECTOR SYSTEMS, AFS Form Shoe Pamphlet (AFS Pamphlet), submitted by Applicant. Applicant objects to the Examiner's conclusion that the AFS Pamphlet teaches "a strap connector (4) compressibly held by the holder". It is not clear to Applicant that the "holder (1)" shown in the AFS Pamphlet exerts a compressive force on the "strap 25 connector (4)". The "holder (1)" shown in the AFS Pamphlet supports the "strap connector (4)" with a mechanical interlock of the "retaining means (2)" and the "strap connector (4)". The first "compression means (3)" interlocks with the "retaining means (2)" to prevent the "strap connector (4)" from disengaging from the "retaining means (2)" and the second 30 "compression means (3)" in turn interlocks with the first "compression means (3)" to prevent the first "compression means (3)" from disengaging from the "retaining means (2)". The "compression means (3)" have tapered ends, but Applicant believes that the tapered ends allow easier insertion of the compression means (3) rather than create compression forces.

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- 1 Notwithstanding the above, Applicant has amended Claim 1 to call for "a holder for compressibly holding a strap connector without penetration" and "a strap connector compressibly held by said holder without penetration of said strap connector by said holder". Support for these amendments is
- 5 found in drawing Figures 7 and 15. Applicant asserts that this clearly distinguishes the present invention from the connection taught by the AFS Pamphlet. The holder shown in the AFS Pamphlet passes through an opening in the strap connector. The present invention does not require the strap to have an opening for a similar mechanical interlock. Applicant asserts
- 10 that Claim 1 of the instant application is not anticipated by the AFS Pamphlet.

The Examiner has identified structures in the AFS Pamphlet that are analogous to those claimed in claims 2-5. Claims 2-5 depend from, and

- 15 therefore incorporate the limitations of, amended Claim 1, and, as discussed above, are consequently not anticipated by the AFS Pamphlet. Claims 2-5 are therefore not subject to rejection under 35 USC. 102(b).

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant requests that the rejection of Claims 1-5

- 20 under 35 USC 102(b) as being unpatentable over the AFS Pamphlet be removed.

Allowable Subject Matter

25 The Examiner has stated that "Claims 6-14 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Regarding claim 6, the prior art does not teach a retaining means comprised of a series of joined flanges."

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Claims 6-14 depend from, and therefore incorporate the limitations of, amended Claim 1. As argued above, amended Claim 1 is not anticipated by the AFS Pamphlet. Therefore, Claims 6-14, which depend from Claim 1, are allowable.

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- 1 Applicant notes, however, that Claim 15 is to one of two nonelected species.

Election/Restrictions

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The Examiner has required election, under 35 USC § 121, of a single disclosed species for prosecution on the merits to which claims shall be restricted if no generic claim is finally held to be allowable.

- 10 Applicant elects, without traverse, the species of figures 1-7 and 15. The claims readable thereon are Claims 1-14.

Applicant notes that claim 15 and 21 depend from claim 3 and claims 16-20 depend from claim 15. If claim 3 is found allowable, Applicant requests that 15 the Examiner examine claims 15 through 21.

Conclusion

In view of the above, it is submitted that the claims now pending are in 20 condition for allowance.

The undersigned wishes to state that if the Examiner has any questions about this response, the undersigned would be happy to try to answer them by telephone.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Reg. No. 41694



Charles R. Cypher, Attorney for Applicant
Law Offices of James R. Cypher
405 14th Street, Suite 1607
Oakland, CA 94612-2777
Tel (510) 832-4111
Fax (510) 832-4115

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